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SINO-SOVIET PROPAGANDA ON SOUTHEAST ASIA

Discussion

Proportional Attention: Soviet radio attention to Southeast Asian countries has during the past 18 months been an almost negligible fraction of Soviet commentary material; the figure for Peking discussion of Southeast Asian affairs is larger, but still of relative insignificance in comparison with the treatment accorded other areas and subjects. During all of 1950 Indochina was the subject of only eight-tenths of one percent of the total number of Moscow commentaries devoted to foreign affairs; not one single commentary was broadcast during all of 1950 which specifically concerned Burma. Attention to Indonesia and Thailand, respectively, was one one-hundredth and six one-hundredths of one percent. (See appended chart #1.) The exact figures for Peking's concentration are not available but at best would no more than triple these figures. Attention to Vietnam, small as it was, would have been considerably smaller but for the Soviet Union's diplomatic recognition of the Ho regime in January 1950. That one event received almost as much attention in January and February 1950 as all other comment on Indochina for the entire year.

It is estimated that 65% of Moscow's meager total of attention to Southeast Asian areas is directed to Asian audiences in Asiatic languages. Even with this heavy localization, hardly four percent of all Moscow commentaries to Southeast Asian audiences are concerned with Indochina, and the percentages for Thailand and Indonesia are only a few hundredths of one percent. There is virtually no attention (in commentaries) to Burma.

General Characteristics: The basic pattern of Moscow-Peking treatment of the Southeast Asian countries contains certain specific features which indicate a coordinated effort. There also appear to be divergencies of varying degree. (see Table I.) Both Moscow and Peking show a tendency to de-emphasize specific local events in the areas while concentrating on the larger aspects of the East-West conflict. This conforms with their basic propaganda practice in relation to events all over the world. While both Peking and Moscow praise the Ho regime, it is almost always in the context of the larger struggle to consolidate the peoples of the world in the great Soviet peace camp.

No Heroizing of Leaders: Although both the major Communist powers vary in the degree of their attention to individual native resistance leaders in these countries, there is a general tendency to refrain from aggrandizing any one person and from singling out any "puppet" leader for special censure. While the leaders of the White Flag Communists in Burma have almost never been mentioned, and Luis Taruc has not within memory been identified as the leader of the Huks, neither has Sukarno, Tran Van Huu, or Songgram been especially castigated. The latter is sometimes qualified as an American puppet, but he is almost never condemned for his wartime collaboration with the Japanese, nor is Pridi Phanomyong, his pro-Communist predecessor who has a much better resistance record, mentioned. Sukarno, President of Indonesia, has never been subjected to criticism, even when his moves were definitely calculated to increase the Western orientation of his regime.

Stress on External Pressures: Further to keep the focus on the larger single battle, both Moscow and Peking put a great deal more emphasis on the evidences of external pressure than upon local affairs. They talk about American attempts to coerce Bao Dai and to supplant the French in Indochina, and the Thakin Nu Government is described most often as a pawn in the endless battle for control between the British and the Americans; the Quirino Government merely executes American dictates. Resistance in Indonesia is against the Dutch and American economic and political exploiters.

No Distinction Among Resistance Groups: Neither Moscow nor Peking makes any great distinction among the various resistance groups in any Southeast Asian country so long as that resistance is against (a) the established government or regime, or (b) against the orientation of that regime towards the Western camp. Moscow has never really distinguished between the Red and White Flag Communists in Burma, and PTO and Karen forces. This is, of course, consistent with the general practice of not quibbling over allies as long as the coalition serves to advance the primary goal. As an example, the insurgents who defied the

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Indonesian Government in the Moluccas and the Celebes following the formation of the unitarian state were not differentiated in treatment from those who sparked the patently Communist-inspired Madium uprising.

Respective Spheres of Propaganda Activity: Peking has apparently accepted responsibility for maintaining tensions in areas contiguous to China, while the Soviet Union is primarily concerned with those countries bordering on the USSR and the European Satellites. Charges that Thailand, Indochina, and Burma have (a) encroached upon Chinese territory, (b) provided bases and men to prepare an American invasion of China, (c) are centers of espionage against the People's Republic of China are pressed vigorously as a staple ingredient of Peking's output. Such charges are sometimes mentioned by Moscow, but with not nearly the sustained intensity, the imputations and warnings of responsibility for further developments, or the portrayal of Chinese anger.

No Commitment as to Eventual Victory: Although Moscow and Peking talk about the "certain" victory of the colonial peoples and the depressed and exploited masses in those areas, these contentions are always the concomitant of expressions of faith in the power of the righteous and the peace-loving; no timetable is ever given for the victory.

Apparent Divergencies in Propaganda Treatment: There is insufficient data to permit the formulation of a documented pattern of specialized treatment or concentration of various components of Moscow and Peking propaganda on Southeast Asia. The following discussion of apparent differences in approach adds impressionistic conclusions to such statistical data as is available.

1. Peking without question devotes a great deal more attention to the expressions of allegiance, protection of interests and general activities of the overseas Chinese communities. General discussion of the overseas Chinese alone comprises more than half of all Peking's comment about Southeast Asian affairs. This concentration: (a) permits Peking to picture the Chinese Communist regime as the one to which the Chinese nationals owe allegiance, (b) provides a pretext for maintaining a state of agitation concerning the colonial regimes, and (c) seeks financial and moral support from Chinese merchant and intellectual classes outside China, who for a long time have provided China with a significant proportion of its foreign exchange. Moscow makes little mention of the activities of any purely national group, racial or religious.
2. Peking places much more stress upon the cultural and economic ties binding the area with China. As with the Western world, Moscow places little emphasis on the community of cultural and economic ties with Asia, in fact less than would be considered natural.
3. Although neither side singles out individuals for special praise as leaders of the resistance, nor is especially virulent in denunciation of so-called puppets, Moscow has mentioned Bao Dai, Thakin Nu, Songgram and even Natsir much more often than Peking.
4. As already stated, Peking devotes a great deal more time to border violations in areas close to China. Although Moscow does mention these charges there is little subsequent commentary elaboration.
5. Peking places much more stress on the purely normal relations with these Southeast Asian areas. The arrival of Chinese missions, the holding of Chinese exhibitions, expressions of support from local groups for China, diplomatic exchanges are much more frequent subjects for comment in Peking's output than in Moscow's. Soviet propaganda is much more purposeful: there is more often something to attack, some threat to be highlighted, some group to be chastized.
6. Peking pays much more attention to the religious groups, especially the Moslems and the Christians. Such attention parallels the stress on religion apparent in Peking's internal broadcasts, and expressions of support from overseas religious groups may be considered an important influence on the allegiances of local groups.
7. Peking pays comparatively great attention to political events, especially in Indochina. The merger of the Viet Minh and the Lien Viet Front to form the general Lien Viet United Front and the formation of the Laodong were

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accorded much more attention by Peking than by Moscow. The latter greeted the political organization as a forerunner of increased resistance to the French and as a vital step on the path to liberation, but after the initial accolades attention was only cursory. Peking, however, expatiated at length for several weeks upon the greater identity of ideals and purposes with China and the Soviet Union that would result. Generally the formation of the Workers Party and the United Front did not occasion a radical change in treatment and the initial high level of attention was not maintained in either case.

Discussion of Individual Countries

A. Indochina

Peking's discussion of Indochina in the military context consists of factual repetitions of the official Ho Government communiques, stress on the losses suffered by the French, the atrocities they have committed, and the aid and abetment accorded the colonialists by the American "interventionists." Moscow is more specific in delineating American control of the French and Bao Dai. It gives more attention to American aid to Indochina, reports that Washington is dissatisfied with the activities of its puppet, Bao Dai, and carries generally more condemnation of the "dirty war" inflicted upon the Indochinese with American connivance.

Peking maintains too a constant harassment of the French for alleged invasions of Chinese territory, and in charges echoed by Moscow claims that the Americans intend to use interned Kuomintang troops against the Chinese. More concerned with divisionist themes, Moscow laments the fate of the French who are forced to permit American intervention in Indochina and are rapidly on the way to be supplanted there as the dominant colonial power. The missions of Melby and Erskine are assailed in conventional Soviet style as indices of intent to establish springboards for aggression against China. Moscow also attacks Point Four aid, which, among other things, is said to entail the use of Thai troops in Indochina.

Both Moscow and Peking are scant in their references to De Lattre, leaving condemnation of him to the Viet Minh radio. Only three topics during the last 16 months have received marked attention from Moscow; the Soviet recognition of the Ho Government in January 1950, which was accorded 8% of all Soviet commentaries for a week, and the announcement of American aid to Bao Dai and the 5th anniversary of the Vietnam Republic, each of which received 3.5 percent. Peking's general attention is somewhat higher but with few peaks.

B. Burma

As already indicated, commentary attention to Burma and Burmese affairs is practically negligible, to the point that not one commentary was devoted to Burmese affairs by Moscow in all of 1950, and only six so far this year, three in the first quarter and three in the second quarter.

Peking's attention to Burma has consisted almost solely of references to the overseas Chinese. These include reports that local Chinese groups are initiating a campaign against American aggression, details of pledges by local Chinese groups to fight colonialism, expressions of support by Chinese and Burmese for the Communist-sponsored peace campaigns, and descriptions of the enthusiasm which greeted the display of Chinese paintings and other samples of Chinese culture in Rangoon. Peking also takes the Thakin Nu Government to task for raiding Chinese newspapers and for persecution of Chinese nationals, but this denunciation is not nearly as vehement as in the case in discussing Malaya, Indochina, or even the Philippines.

More of Moscow's meager comment is concerned with the militant opposition to the regime, which is characterized as a pseudo-independent satellite of Britain. Moscow insists that only a real people's revolution will bring Burmese independence. As to who will lead the fight for that independence, Moscow makes no specific distinction between the pro-Soviet White Flag Communists and the allegedly Trotskyite Red Flag group, and even the People's Volunteer Organization and the Karen National Defense Organization are not ordinarily differentiated.

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Recently Moscow has been talking a great deal more about general armed resistance to the Thakin Nu Government, which has reportedly sold out to the Americans and is attempting to undercut the British. Such reports come at a time when other Southeast Asian transmitters have reported the imminent formation of a united front resistance in Burma containing all opposition elements. Moscow has also charged on occasion that the British engineered the assassination of Aung San and are holding his fate as a club over the head of Thakin Nu.

C. Indonesia

By far the major portion of Peking's comment on Indonesia is concerned with overseas Chinese activities, their expressions of support for China, and their support for the peace campaign and the campaign against American aggression.

Moscow, as in general, is more militant. It has upon occasion condemned the Natsir Government for collaboration with the imperialists, and has charged that the unitarian state was created under American prodding as a means of dislodging the Dutch and the British from the NEI and New Guinea. Moscow also describes American imperialism as the principal enemy of the Indonesian people and Mathew Fox's alleged deal with the Jogjakarta Government to monopolize Indonesia's economy is cited as a proof of American efforts to succeed the Dutch.

Moscow also charges the United States with attempting to put pressure on the Indonesian Government to change that nation's neutral stand in the Korean war, and repeats the standard charge that the Americans intend to convert the area into bases for aggression in Asia and the Pacific. Although Moscow does on occasion claim that resistance is centered about the Communist Party, no apparent effort was made to differentiate the resistance in the Moluccas, the Celebes and West Java from the obviously Communist-inspired Madiun rebellion.

D. Thailand

Both Moscow and Peking generally assail the Thai Government as plotting with the Americans to attack both China and Indochina. Peking's charges are repeated more often. Peking places more stress upon the charge that the United States is arming Thailand, and that American power in that country is a threat to Asia. Moscow, for its part, has declared that Kuomintang troops are being armed in Thailand for an assault on China, and that the Americans have taken over the control of Thailand's defense and economy.

Both Moscow and Peking have charged that American military personnel are training spies in Thailand with aggressive intent. Both have attacked the Songgram regime for sending troops to Korea, a fact cited in proof of Songgram's subservience to the United States. Peking's major stress, as in the case of other areas of Southeast Asia, is on the activities and pronouncements of the overseas Chinese, who are reportedly being molested and discriminated against by the Government.

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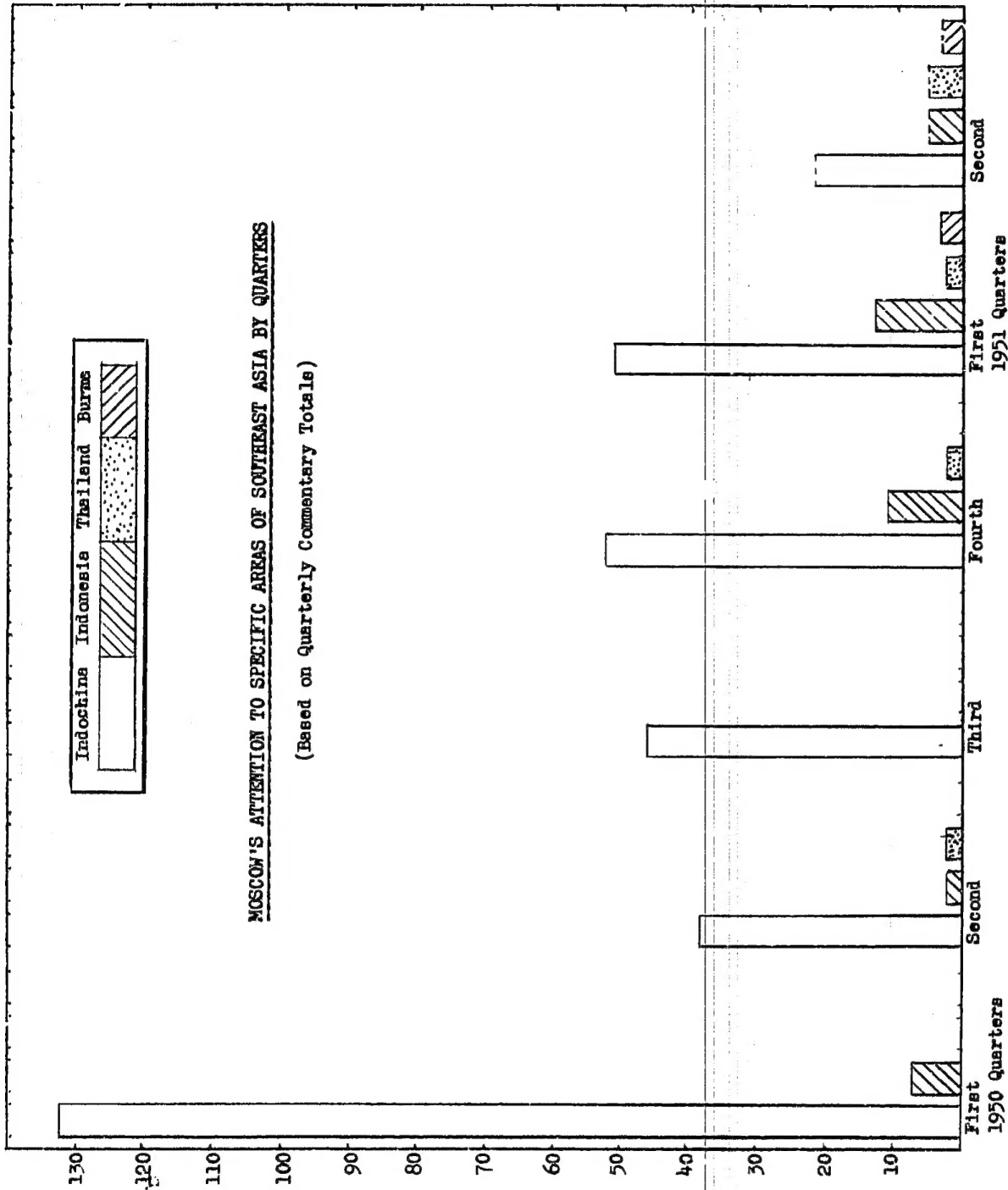
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Chart #1



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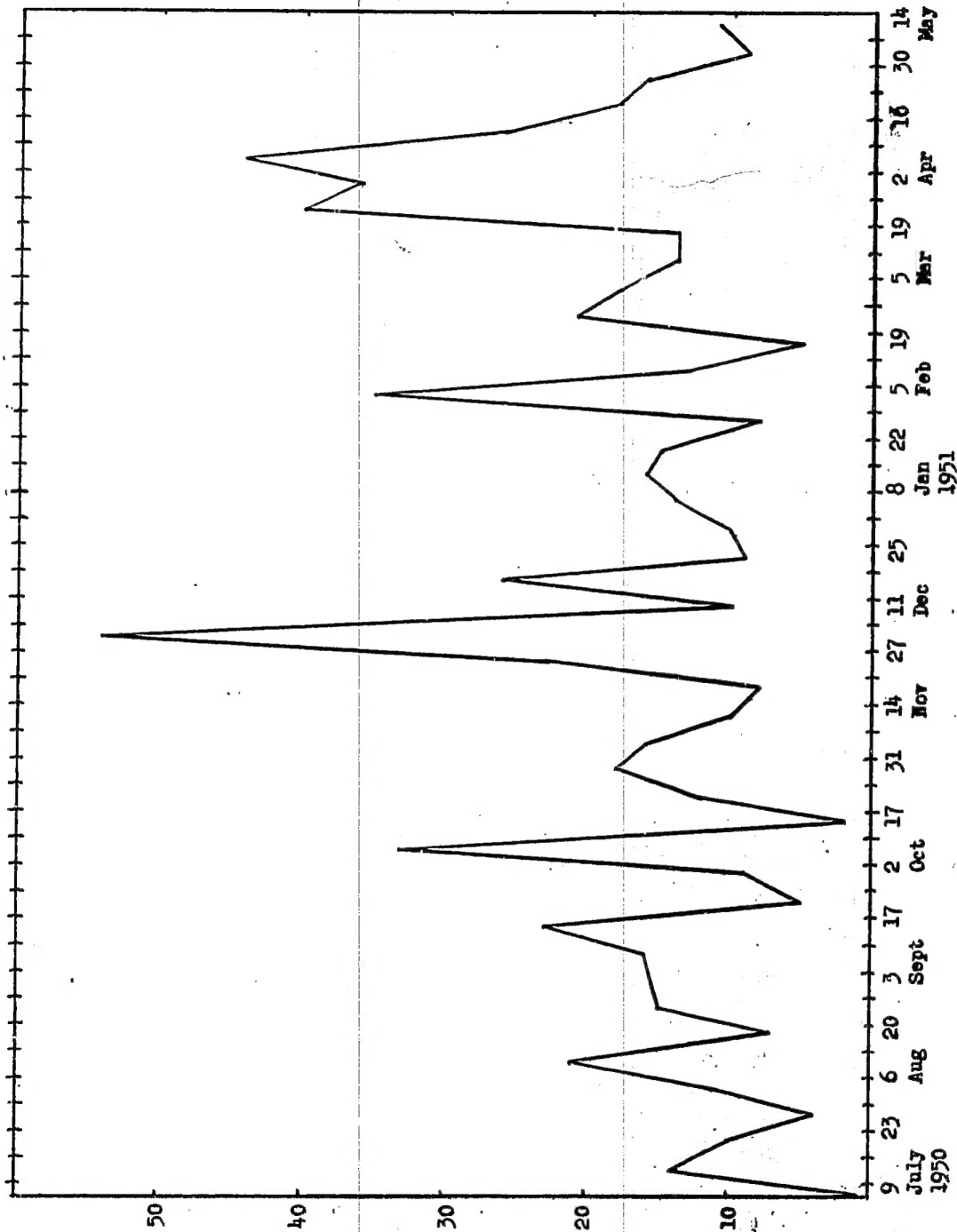
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Chart #2

MOSCOW'S ATTENTION TO SOUTHEAST ASIA

(Based on Absolute Number of Commentaries)



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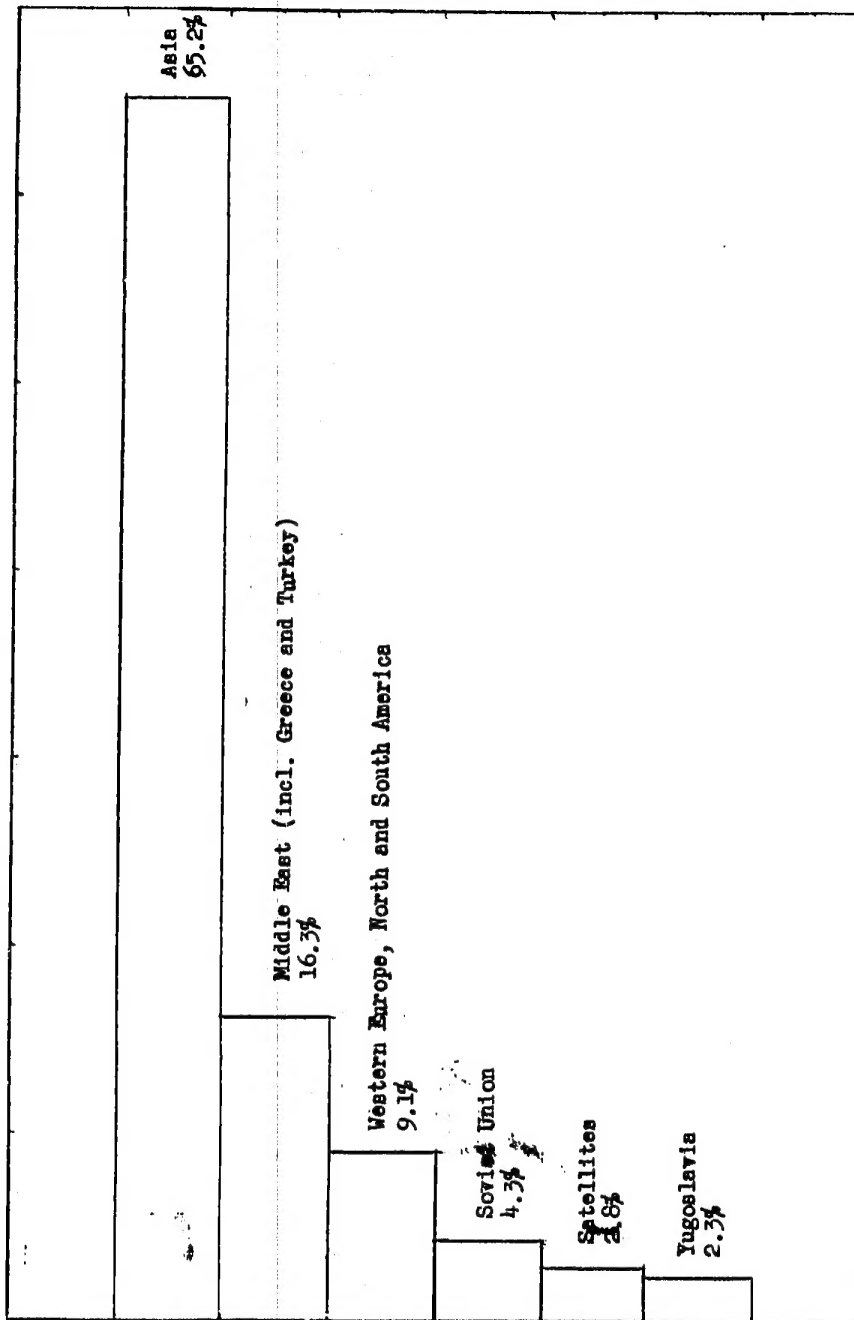
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Chart #3

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Table IAPPARENT DIVERGENCIES IN MOSCOW AND PEKING'S TREATMENT OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN AREAS

Moscow

a. Little mention of activities or groups within a country on purely ethnic or religious bases.

b. Little comment on cultural and economic ties with the USSR.

c. More attacks on individual local "puppets" in the various countries. On specific occasions Moscow has condemned Bao Dai, Thakin Nu, Sukarno, Songgram, Mohammed Natsir.

d. Very little commentary exploitation of alleged frontier incidents in areas contiguous to China.

e. Relatively negligible commentary attention to Burma, Thailand, Indonesia; most comment is in specific news items.

f. Little or no attention to positive factors in local governments.

g. Greater stress on the USSR as the leader of the world "peace" camp.

Peking

Stress on the activities, expressions of allegiance, and protection of interests of the overseas Chinese; reports of religious support.

More attention to ties binding the areas culturally and economically with China and on the historically friendly relations with the Chinese people.

Virtually no singling out in attacks on native rulers of the various areas.

Stress on charges of border violations, especially from Indochina and Thailand.

More commentary attention; more stress on normal relations with these areas.

Greater attention to economic and political advances, exchange of missions, diplomatic exchanges.

More emphasis on community of interests and equality of people's governments.

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